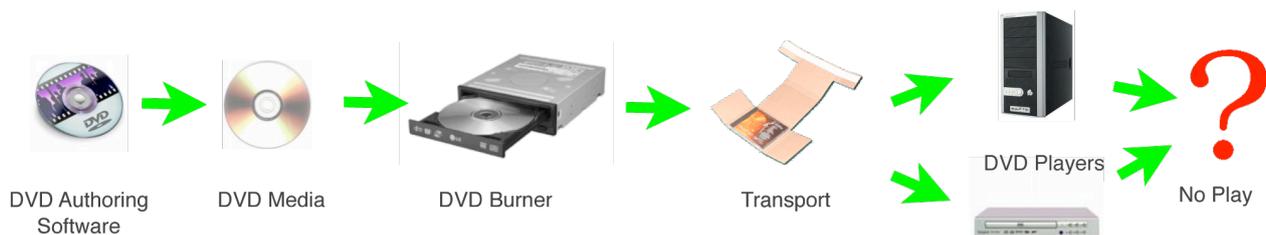




## My DVD won't play!

There is nothing as embarrassing as when you get a call from a client saying that the draft DVD you just sent them won't play. Most of the time there is a simple explanation for disc failure, but in some instances there is absolutely nothing you can do to make that disc play on a certain players. These are commonly known as a "compatibility" issues. Are there not supposed to be standards covering this whole process? Yes, there are, but the DVD is now over 15 years old, and with the more complex demands placed upon it by newer technologies, and with the vast number of manufactures of players, burners and media, computability issues will occasionally occur. Compatibility issues can be kept to a minimum by following the tips in this article. We will follow the production path of a DVD to explain some of the main reasons for DVD disc failure and tips on how to avoid them.



### DVD Authoring Software

There are numerous software packages available for editing and authoring DVDs, most of which do a good job. We assume that you have followed the correct procedure during the editing and authoring phases and you are now ready to export and burn your disc. Many playback problems are due to incorrectly set preferences resulting in incorrectly formatted files being exported for burning. Following are some of the most common errors:

1. Do not set the data rate too high. If on playback the DVD stalls, slows down or stops completely one of the most common reasons is that the data rate is too high for the player to handle. In other words too much information. Find the encoding preferences and set the "Bit Rate" to 5.5 Mbps and the "Max Bit Rate" to 7.2 Mbps. These are the maximum settings I use and I only reduce them if I need to fit longer movies onto a single disc. Remember though that reducing the bit rate reduces the quality of the movie.
2. Countries have different broadcast standards eg Australia & Britain use PAL and the USA uses NTSC. Ensure you have the correct format setting for the country of destination.
3. Another setting that can cause playback problems is DVD regions. DVD regions were set up to help stop the unauthorised duplication of DVDs, mainly movies, and divides the world into 7 regions. When I set my preferences I always set the "Regions" to all, ensuring that the DVDs can be played in all regions.

### DVD Media

There are many different brands and types of blank DVD disc media eg DVD+R, DVD-R, DVD+RW, DVD-RW. Always use a well known brand of blank disc, and never skimp on quality. Ensure the discs are the correct type of blank discs specified by both your authoring software and DVD burner. For example my DVD burner will burn to both DVD-R and DVD-RW but my DVD authoring software only specifies DVD-R, meaning I must use DVD-R blank discs.

### DVD Burners

There are many different brands and types of DVD burners available. Most DVD burners will read or play most types of discs media but, will only burn to one or two specific types of disc media eg DVD-R, DVD-RW or DVD +R, DVD +RW. Generally newer and better quality burners have better compatibility and will burn information more accurately to the disc, than older or lower quality burners. Always, after burning, test the DVD by playing it back on a couple of different players, making sure all the menus, buttons and movies all work as intended.

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## Transport

It is no good spending all that time editing and authoring your DVD project if it doesn't get to the intended viewer undamaged. Sometimes it is almost impossible to see damage to a DVD, so ensure all DVDs are well protected before sending out.

## DVD Players

Why is it that having done all that you can to ensure maximum compatibility you still find that some DVDs will not play on some players? We will cover separately the issues involving computer based players and conventional DVD players.

1. **Computer Based Players:** Most playback problems occur when playing a DVD disc on a Desktop PC or Laptop. When it happens the first thing I always do is try the disc on another player, preferably a conventional DVD player, and usually they play fine. So what has happened? Some of the most common causes why DVDs will not play are as follows:
  - The computer does not have a DVD player but only a CD player, or the computer does not have the software installed to play a DVD. It still happens, mainly on older computers or on networks where companies restrict hardware and software.
  - The DVD players are not compatible with all types of disc media.
  - The data rate is too high for the disc player to handle, usually a problem on older and lower quality players.
2. **Conventional DVD Players:** Most playback problems are due to the DVD being the wrong region, or the data rate being too high. Again, this is mainly caused by the DVD player being an older or lower quality player.

## Summary: What to do if a DVD Won't Play?

When a disc fails to play, first try the disc on another player or, if that's not possible, try another DVD, preferably one you have viewed and is known to be OK. If after these two tests it appears that the disc is at fault check and try the following:

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1) Burn Another Disc  | a) Try burning another disc. Faulty discs or a failure in the burning process can occur.  |
| 2) Authoring Software | a) Check that you have the DVD project set to the correct broadcast standard eg Australia= PAL, USA = NTSC.<br>b) Check the region setting is set to your region or set it to "All Regions".<br>c) Check the "Data Rate" is not set too high. Ideally settings should be no more than 5.5 Mbps for the "Bite Rate" and 7.2 Mbps for the "Max Bit Rate". |
| 3) Media              | a) Check that disc media is correct type for both authoring software and the disc burner eg -R, -RW, +R, +RW.<br>b) Try a better quality or another brand disc. You will be surprised what a difference this can make.  |
| 4) DVD Burner         | a) Try burning a disc using different software or on another burner.  |

Finally, remember that even though you have taken every precaution there will always be times that a DVD will not play or play properly on certain players.

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